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ABSTRACT

The Soil Conservation Society of America's (SCSA) aim is to advance the science and art of good land and water use. Conservation education has a significant role in achieving the wise use of these resources. In this report, perspectives are offered on: (1) the requirements for effective conservation education programs; (2) rationale for conservation education; (3) policies and programs encouraged by SCSA; and (4) what SCSA chapters can do. Thirteen specific recommendations for promoting conservation education are listed. (ML)

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Conservation Education

A position statement by the

Soil Conservation Society of America

SE 047 494

About SCSA

The Soil Conservation Society of America, founded in 1945, is a nonprofit scientific and educational organization. SCSA is dedicated to promoting the conservation of land and water resources. It is not a part of government.

SCSA's 13,000 members include researchers, administrators, educators, planners, technicians, legislators, farmers and ranchers, conservation district supervisors, and planning commissioners. These people represent nearly every academic discipline concerned with the management of land and water resources. All have a profound interest in the wise use of these resources.

SCSA attempts to improve the awareness and effectiveness of its members by informing them about land and water conservation issues, by providing a means for them to develop leadership and other qualities, and by using their combined talents to produce guidelines that can be used to resolve land use and water problems.

SCSA invites you to lend your influence to the highly important task of conserving the world's land and water resources. For more information about the programs and services SCSA offers its members, write to the Soil Conservation Society of America, 7515 Northeast Ankeny Road, Ankeny, Iowa 50021.

If present accomplishments are to be permanently effective, the forces of education must rally to the militant support of soil and water conservation. In the schools of the nation, in the public forum, and in the literature of our times conservation must become a by-word.

I am convinced in my own mind...that consistent, relentless exposure of facts—accurate and complete—will in the end bring results. No group is in a better position to take the initiative in this direction than you who are entrusted with the responsibility for American education.

HUGH Bennett offered these observations more than 40 years ago to members of the National Education Association. Logic tells us that creating conservation awareness among new groups of students, teachers, farmers, and public officials is a continuing opportunity for the Soil Conservation Society of America.

SCSA was formed to advance the science and art of good land and water use. Conservation education can play a significant role in achieving the wise use of these resources.

Laws and regulations will produce some measure of success, but committed citizens can be far more effective. Moreover, voluntary efforts are much less expensive than enforcement programs.

Conservation education leads to knowledge and understanding of the natural and human environments and of human interrelationships with the natural environment. Conservation education provides opportunities to learn about land and water management. And conservation education is a vehicle for teaching other academic subjects. The goal is to have citizens more aware of the natural environment, which will translate into environmentally sound personal and professional decisions and actions.

The current situation

Rapid urbanization means that more people today live further from their sources of food and water. Having little contact with land and water as the key ingredients in food and fiber production, many people lose sight of and appreciation for their dependence on the natural world.

The success of the North American food production and distribution systems masks one fundamental fact: without productive land and abundant water, the social and economic structure of the continent might be jeopardized.

The task of educating the public about the environment is monumental. About one-fourth of the people in the United States and Canada are involved in education as students, teachers, or administrators. Even so, the solution to achieving an environmentally aware citizenry begins in individual schools.

Conservation education provides opportunities for exciting, creative activities that will stimulate teachers and motivate students.

Development of effective conservation education programs in any school requires:

1. A well-informed committee to develop and

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maintain the program.

2. Support from the school community.

3. Understanding of the educational nature of conservation education.

4. Professional assistance when requested.

The conservation education program planned by the committee must:

1. Be practical and achievable.

2. Meet current educational standards as outlined by local, state, and provincial regulations.

3. Be student oriented.

4. Cross all academic lines.

5. Allow for fun in conjunction with learning and discovery.

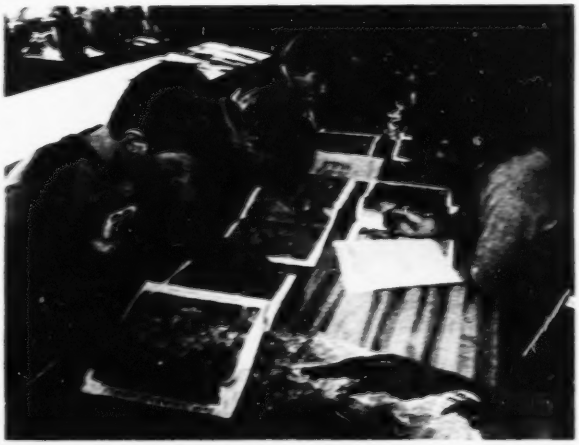
To achieve these goals, the committee must:

1. Be aware of environmental relationships.

2. Understand how humans interrelate with the natural environment.

3. Understand how natural resources are a part of all academic subjects.

Schools need assistance to achieve these goals from local organizations, such as civic groups, youth-serving organizations, professional societies, and interested individuals, along with local, state, provincial, and federal governmental agencies. These organizations and agencies have the professional expertise and often the financial and material resources necessary to provide various levels of assistance. This assistance may include programs, scholarships, publications, or technical assistance.



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Why conservation education?

In an ever-increasing age of sophisticated technology, such basic subjects as land and water conservation may be overlooked. We conservationists probably have not brought to the attention of educators the role modern technology plays in resource conservation. Moreover, we have considered the application of vegetative and mechanical conservation practices, harvesting methods, habitat improvements, and research to be the foundation of the conservation movement. In reality, none of these measures would be needed if citizens who own and manage land and water resources were committed to the conservation of these resources.

The application of conservation practices requires, first, that an individual understand the need for and benefits of conservation. Only after that educational experience occurs and the individual *wants* conservation *will* conservation take place.

Education, therefore, is an investment in the future.

A goal and some commitments

It is SCSA's goal to encourage conservation education policies and programs that:

1. Develop land and water conservation concepts.

2. Relate to local, national, and world concerns and problems.

3. Seek support from educators for scholarships,

programs, and site-development.

4. Seek public support by providing constructive solutions to problems.

5. Benefit all levels of education and all academic subjects.

To achieve this goal, SCSA commits itself to the following:

1. Developing publications on wise use of land and water resources for teachers and others involved in education.

2. Maintaining active membership in the Alliance for Environmental Education.

3. Cooperating with other organizations whose primary purpose is conservation education. This cooperation may involve exchanging educational materials, cosponsoring workshops and seminars, and sponsoring major conferences.

4. Emphasizing conservation education objectives through formal and informal educational, conservation, youth, and civic organizations.

5. Encouraging state, provincial, and federal agencies to include conservation education as an agency goal.

6. Expanding conservation education scholarship programs.

7. Placing more emphasis on education in the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* and SCSA's special publications.

8. Informing members and others about how education and conservation can be organized and what strategies to use.

9. Encouraging chapters (a) to participate in conservation education activities and to develop a chapter position statement on conservation education, (b) to have an active conservation education committee functioning with schools, civic, and youth organizations, and (c) to help school districts use their school sites as locations for outdoor classrooms. Chapters can provide assistance with planning and development without infringing on the school's outdoor classroom committee's plans and decisions.

10. Cooperating with local, regional, state, and provincial educational agencies, colleges, and universities to encourage establishment of conservation education at all levels of education.

11. Promoting the establishment of environmental conservation education camps by local, regional, state, and provincial education agencies.

What chapters can do

Chapters of SCSA can do any number of things to promote conservation education:

1. Approach school system administrators and offer assistance to incorporate conservation education into the overall educational program offered to students.

2. Contact deans or chairmen of education departments in colleges and universities and offer assistance in incorporating conservation education into the training of future and current educators.

3. Participate in school system workshops, both in

planning and in supplying expert help from SCSA members.

4. Gain acceptance of SCSA's educational publications by local school systems, and acquire financing sufficient for effective distribution and use.

5. Use leading educators in SCSA chapter programs, and solicit their membership and active participation.

6. Provide leadership and technical assistance in the establishment and effective use of outdoor classrooms, park lands, nature preserves, and conservation education camps.

7. Inform state representatives, provincial members of parliament, federal members of parliament, and congressional delegations of the importance of conservation education and encourage funding for this purpose.

8. Support the energy conservation education goal established in SCSA's position statement on energy: "Encourage every organization, institution, and agency with responsibilities in public education to proceed immediately to develop an energy conservation education program." Using conservation practices on school sites can be a positive factor with educators.

9. Work for the adoption of teacher certification programs that establish or upgrade the qualifications of teachers in the area of natural resource or environmental studies.

10. Encourage the teaching of courses on natural resources, environment, or conservation at colleges and universities within the states and provinces to develop both teachers and knowledgeable citizens.

11. Recommend the use of conservation education consultants or specialists on the staff of natural resource agencies, private conservation organizations, and state and provincial departments of education (or equivalent body) to develop and coordinate environmental curricula and materials.

12. Collect and distribute ideas and concepts of good environmental programs that come to the attention of the chapter, particularly those that can be used in adult education.

13. Encourage each member of SCSA to (a) recognize that conservation education responsibilities do not belong only to educators or members of a chapter's education committee—each member must participate in conservation education activities; (b) seek conservation education leadership roles in his or her home community (such as membership on county environmental education advisory committees); (c) share technical expertise with educators in planning and developing outdoor classrooms, holding in-service or pre-service teacher workshops, and other environmental education activities; and (d) voluntarily support and assist in the procurement and distribution of SCSA's conservation education literature. □

Adopted in August 1984

Task Force on Environmental Education

This statement was prepared by SCSA's Task Force on Environmental Education: **Thomas W. Levermann** (chairman), Washington, D.C.; **Edwin G. Crocker**, Storm Lake, Iowa; **Ted Kupelian**, Bethesda, Maryland; **Beverly J. Miller**, Salt Lake City, Utah; **Dan A. Sebert**, Stillwater, Oklahoma; and **Donna L. T. Szuhy**, Gahanna, Ohio.